

## Testimony to the Children's Committee in Support of HB 6897 – An Act Concerning the Application of Pesticides at State-Operated Parks, Athletic Fields and Playgrounds

March 3, 2015

Members of this committee, my name is Debra Cohen. I live in Wethersfield CT and I am here speaking on behalf of myself as well as members of ConnFACT (CT Families Against Chemical Trespass).

The use of pesticides has wisely been prohibited in CT on school grounds used by children from Preschool to 8th grade. This bold step helps to ensure a lowering of environmental health risks to the young children using these areas. Our young ones' vulnerability is due in large part to their lower body weight, still-developing immune systems as well as their size which literally puts them closer to the ground! These same young children, who are the most vulnerable to the toxic ingredients in pesticides are also playing and walking on other playgrounds, state-operated parks and even athletic fields and should be protected in these areas as well.

EPA-approved pesticides are designed to kill insects and are linked to cancer, endocrine disruption and other serious health effects in children. Even low levels of exposure are toxic and can cause serious health problems, sometimes not occurring until years later. Warnings on pesticide product labels are there for that very reason although they may not even tell the complete story about the dangers posed within. Testing is done by the companies that make and profit from these pesticide products, not by any regulatory agency. The effect of these chemicals on a particular area of ground is not necessarily limited to just that area; wind drift during spraying, seepage into ground water and residue carried from one area to another by those of us who walk on them are among the ways that pesticide contamination may occur. A ban of pesticides in all of these areas would help to protect our youngsters, as well as pets and older citizens.

I am sure you have or will hear testimony about the increased costs associated with maintaining areas that are pesticide-free. How do these costs compare with future health associated costs for the treatment of myriad health problems that will be faced by so many who are exposed to toxins? Interrupted school attendance, lost wages, increased healthcare costs for humans and animals, to say nothing of the physical experience of such consequences must be factored in to any decision about what is in the present AND FUTURE best interests of all CT citizens, particularly young children.

The solution is not Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as an alternative to eliminating pesticides. IPM still allows for the use of toxic pesticides and depends entirely on the actions of those making the decisions for the grounds with no oversight. Hence, if they choose to use toxic pesticides, they may. I'm sure you'll hear from plenty of the opposition that IPM is the solution but it is not. And, it is definitely not in the best interests of our youngest and most vulnerable.

Among the most pleasurable things that come to mind with the approach of spring and summer are the picnics, games and other outdoor activities that make being outdoors so enjoyable and refreshing. This committee has a responsibility to help see to it that our outdoor areas, as defined

in this Bill, are protected to provide those opportunities without the fear of dire consequences from the unseen but all too real presence of pesticides that are not safe. My organization, ConnFACT, and I urge you to support HB 6897.

Respectfully submitted,

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